

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7137
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL BELEM
AMCONSUL PORTO ALEGRE
AMCONSUL RECIFE
AMCONSUL SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAO PAULO 1925

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, BR
SUBJ: VIEWS OF SAO PAULO II ARMORED BRIGADE COMMANDER, GEN.
MORAES REGO, ON PRESIDENT GEISEL'S POLITICAL GOALS

1. SUMMARY: GEN. GOSTAVO MORAES REGO IS WIDELY REPUTED TO BE ONE OF THE GENERALS CLOSEST TO PRESIDENT GEISEL. THIS CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE DURING A CALL AT HIS COMMAND IN CAMPINAS ON JULY 30. A FULL REPORT OF THE CONVERSATION HAS BEEN SUBMITTED SEPARATELY. THE CONVERSATION COVERED LIBERALIZATION OF THE REGIME, GEISEL'S POLITICAL ACTIVITY, THE GROWTH OF THE MDB EVEN UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S ARTIFICIAL ELECTORAL RULES, THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION, AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GEISEL AND EX-PRESIDENT MEDICI. THESE ARE LINKED ISSUES WHICH HAVE BEN BROUGHT IN-CREASINGLY TO PUBLIC DISCUSSION BY THE UPCOMING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. GEN. REGO'S COMMENTS PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THESE ISSUES FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF A STRONG SUPPORTER OF PRESIDENT GEISEL. END SUMMARY.

2. GEN. REGO TOLD CONGEN POLITICAL OFFICER THAT PRESIDENT GEISEL IS COMMITTED TO A SURE BUT STEADY LIBERALIZATION OF THE REGIME. HIS FIRST PRIORITY IS TO AVOID A RETROCESSION IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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REVOLUTION, EVEN IF IT MEANS LEAVING THE LIBERALIZATION PROCESS

TO BE COMPLETED BY HIS SUCCESSOR.

3. CONCERNING THE CURRENT DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION, GEN. REGO SAID THAT GEISEL WILL TRY TO PREVENT SPECULATION SIMPLY BECAUSE HE DOES NOT WANT HIS POWER UNDERCUT DURING HIS LAST TWO YEARS IN OFFICE. HE STATED THAT NO ONE, INCLUDING GEN. FIGUEIREDO, CHIEF OF THE SNI, HAD THE INSIDE TRACK ON THE NOMINATION. GEN. REGO SAID HE DID NOT TAKE FIGUEIREDO'S CANDIDACY SERIOUSLY WHILE FIGUEIREDO HOLDS HIS CURRENT POSITION, SINCE GEISEL WOULD NATURALLY ASK THE SNI CHIEF TO CHECK ON CANDIDATES' QUALIFICATIONS. "THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT THE SUCCESSION WITH FIGUEIREDO KNOWING THAT FIGUEIREDO WANTS THE JOB." REGO SAID.

4. GEN. REGO ALSO TALKED ABOUT EX-PRESIDENT MEDICI'S RETURN TO THE POLITICAL SCENE. HE CHARACTERIZED MEDICI AS A MAN WHO WAS RIGHT FOR THE RELATIVELY SIMPLER TIMES IN WHICH HE GOVERNED. MEDICI'S EMPHASIS ON INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT HAD BEEN CORRECT. BUT THE SITUATION IN WHICH PRESIDENT GEISEL MUST GOVERN IS MORE COMPLEX, STATED REGO. GEISEL MUST BE MORE POLITICAL. GEN. REGO SAID THAT MEDICI'S JULY 15 SPEECH IN VICOSA, MINAS GERAIS, SHOWS THAT MEDICI STILL HOLDS THE WORLD VIEW HE HELD AS PRESIDENT. BUT TIMES HAVE CHANGED AND PRESIDENT GEISEL REFLECTS THESE CHANGES.

5. GEN. REGO CAME BACK TO THE TOPIC OF GEISEL'S LIBERALIZATION GOALS IN DISCUSSING THE NOVEMBER MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. HE SAID THAT THE MDB MUST MEASURE ITS VICTORY NOW AND IN 1978. HE SAID IT IS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN SOME SORT OF BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES. "THE MDB SHOULD NOT WANT TO SMASH ARENA IN NOVEMBER OR THERE WILL BE A REACTION FROM THE MILITARY." HE REITERATED THAT PRESIDENT GEISEL IS COMMITTED TO LIBERALIZATION BUT THAT THE MILITARY WOULD LASH OUT "LIKE A CAGED BEAST" IF IT THOUGHT THAT THE REVOLUTION WAS BEING LOST TO THE OPPPOSITION.

6. CG/EMBASSY COMMENT: GEN. REGO'S VIEWS ON A POSSIBLE OPPOSITION VICTORY IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTINS CONFIRM THE STANDARD INTERPRETATION OF GEISEL'S POST-ELECTION INTENTIONS. PRESIDENT GEISEL'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT THE ELECTIONS HAVE REFERRED TO THE NEED FOR AN ARENA VICTORY TO PERMIT HIM TO CONTINUE

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LIBERALIZING THE REGIME. GEN. REGO ADMITS AN MDB VICTORY AS LONG AS IT IS NOT SO GREAT THAT IT CREATES MILITARY PRESSURES ON THE PRESIDENT TO FURTHER RESTRICT THE OPPPOSITION. THE PRESIDENTI MAY HAVE THE CARDS TO CARRY OUT THIS POLITICAL MANEUVER. THE VARIOUS WAYS OF MEASURING VICTORY WILL PROBABLY ALLOW THE GOVERNMENT TO SAY THAT IT WON MOST MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AND WON THE POPULAR VOTE IN ALMOST ALL THE STATES. THE MDB WILL PROBABLY BE ABLE TO CLAIM VICTORY IN THE OVERALL

POPULAR VOTE DUE TO OPPOSITION STRENGTH IN THE LARGE SOUTHERN CITIES, SUCH AS SAO PAULO AND RIO DE JANEIRO. BUT IF THE PRESIDENT AVOIDS A MILITARY REACTION AS A RESULT OF THE ELECTIONS, HE WILL BE ABLE TO PRESENT THE REGIME'S ACCEPTANCE OF AN IMPROVED SHOWING BY THE OPPOSITION AS ANOTHER STEP FORWARD IN THE LIBERALIZATION PROCESS LOOK TOWARD THE 1978 ELECTIONS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAO PAULO 1925

7. GEN. REGO'S COMMENTS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EX-PRESIDENT MEDICI AND PRESIDENT GEISEL ALSO CONFIRM TO THAT IMPORTANT SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCES EXIST BETWEEN THE TWO MEN. GEN. REGO ALLUDED TO SOME OF THESE DIFFERENCES BY REFERRING TO MEDICI'S RECENT SPEECH. MEDICI IN VICOSA HIT HARD AGAINST LIBERALISM, WHICH HE SAID COULD BE USED TO DESTROY LIBERTY. THE SPEECH, MEDICI'S FIRST SINCE LEAVING OFFICE, WAS INTERPRETED IN SAO PAULO AS A CRITICISM OF GEISEL'S LIBERALIZATION PLICY AND A SUGGESTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TIGHTEN INTERNAL SECURITY. ANOTHER POINT WAS RAISED BY EX-TRANSPORTATION MINISTER MARIO ANDREAZZA, WHO MEDICI SENT TO SPEAK IN SAO PAULO AT THE END OF JULY ANDREZZA EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE ENTERPRISE TO THE REVOLUTION, RECALLING THE HEYDAY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS UNDER MEDICI AND PLAYING ON CURRENT BUSINESS DISCONTENT WITH THE GROWTH OF STATE AND MIXED

ENTERPRISES. A THIRD POINT THAT UPSETS CONSERVATIVE MILITARY IS REPORTEDLY GEISEL'S INSISTENCE ON STUMPING FOR ARENA (SAO PAULO ARENA LEADERS STATE THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL VISIT ALL MAJOR SAO PAULO CITIES BEFORE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS), THU PUTTING THE REGIME IN A TOO OPEN POLITICAL ROLE.

8. GEN. REGO'S COMMENTS DENIGRATING THE CHANCES OF GEN.

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FIGUEIREDO AS A POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR TO PRESIDENT GEISEL ARE ALSO INTERESTING. A NUMBER OF SAO PAULO OBSERVERS, INCLUDING PROMINENT JOURNALIST MINO CARTA, HAVE IDENTIFIED GEN. FIGUEIREDO AS MEDICI'S CANDIDATE. ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION IS TWO YEARS OFF, CANDIDATES UNDER THE 1964 REGIME HAVE USUALLY GOTTEN INTO THE FIELD EARLY IN AN ATTEMPT TO CONSOLIDATE SUPPORT OF THE OFFICER CORPS. ON OCCASION, THESE EARLY STARTERS HAVE BEEN "BURNED" BY THEIR EARLY AGGRESSIVENESS.

9. EMBASSY CONCURS.

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